

DANZIG: SEE NO EVIL

An interview with
Glenn Danzig
by Stephanie Young

Photos by
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"Men rarely (if ever) manage to dream up a god superior to themselves. Most gods have the manners and morals of a spoiled child."
— Robert Heinlen (1973)

One scene in Danzig's home video stands out in memory. Glenn Danzig is at home and decides to show the viewer some selections from his library. He pulls out a volume called "The Lost Books Of The Bible" which contains omitted stories from the New Testament. Glenn tells us the books were once part of the Bible, then later removed by the church. According to this source, Christ killed several people and was more humanly than godly. How accurate the stories are, I don't know, but it does raise certain questions about one's faith in organized religion. After seeing the video, I began listening to Glenn's lyrics more closely; I wanted to see what I could find. First of all, they're not about Satan or satanic worship. This is perhaps the most commonly used description of his songs and it stems from pure ignorance. It's also one of the reasons why Glenn refuses to do many interviews. When he does talk, the

barrier that surrounds him comes down. At the time of our conversation, Danzig's second Lp **DANZIG II — LUCIFUGE** had been in the record shops for about two months. The Lp of eleven songs is branded with the distinctive Danzig beat, a whipping guitar backed with a dash of blues. It's easy to see why this band is so popular. They manage to combine the power of myth with good old-fashioned rock n' roll.

The day we speak, Mr. Danzig is in Dallas on the first leg of the **LUCIFUGE** tour. In the Lone Star state, he goes under the name of "Lucky Jackson" — a nomer the hotel operator doesn't even flinch at. Within seconds, I'm patched through and the phone rings about three times before "Lucky" picks up. It's late afternoon and he sounds awake. No need to worry about a cranky crooner. After a few awkward hellos, we begin the interview and it turns out to be an enlightening half hour. We talk about the usual things, then go into



Keepers of the flame: John Christ, Eerie Von, Glenn Danzig & Chuck Biscuits.

some of the heavier stuff — the topics some won't ask in fear of offending the pumped up man in black. At the start of our conversation, Glenn is slightly vague. He replies with one word answers and waits until he can really sink his teeth into something. A general question is no good. What he's looking for is an inquiry using a smart comparison — one that proves you understand what he's all about. Once this is established, it's smooth sailing.

Because Glenn Danzig writes good songs, people want to know what they're about. They want to find the demon that fuels his fire. "It's an easy thing," he utters. "I don't force it. It's a natural progression. I'm constantly evolving, constantly going up, up, up... otherwise it's not worth it." The singer's songs provide the day to day remedy that helps him survive. "A lot of times it's just too heavy for people. I'm constantly being labeled a satanist because I view Satan and Lucifer in a different light than they're used to seeing him." Glenn asks the age old question, "If God is so good, why is there so much evil in this world?" But it's only a small part of the process. With tremendous skill, the singer knows how to turn words into symbols of love, ignorance and faith. A lot of his lyrics come from the Bible, so it appears blasphemous when he uses terms like "Devil's plaything" or "heart full of hell." "I pretty much use what I have to, to get my point across," he says flatly. "There's nothing taboo or sacred to me. The world is the world and I shouldn't have to make excuses for it. The problem is, I'm putting lyrics into a song that can either be taken very heavily or they can be glossed over. A lot of people forget that it's an album of music."

Besides giving his audience something to think about, Glenn says he also has to give them an album of songs that they will enjoy. "I don't see anything really dark about my songs. There's nothing really dark about a song like 'Girl' or 'I'm The One' or 'Blood And Tears.' 'Girl' is a love song and 'Blood And Tears' is a sad love song. It just shows people's stupidity when they lump everything together." The

average Joe on the street might have some trouble figuring out what Glenn Danzig is all about, but it's the music journalists, the ones who should know, that piss him off. "I'm very picky about who I do interviews with," he says. "I don't like being misquoted. Many times I've done interviews with people, and they'll write things I never said or put questions in front of answers they never asked me. The British papers do that a lot. They'll be really nice to you in person, then rip you apart in print." Eventually this unprofessionalism takes its toll. In the future, only a select



Glenn belts out "Am I Demon" at the Beacon in NYC.

few will be granted his time. Meanwhile, he'd like to meet those who print false information and make them pay for their crimes! "I'd like to rip their heads off," Glenn states emphatically.

Known primarily as the man who reads, Glenn's book collection is vast. His reading material ranges from scientific reports to comic books. "I think anyone who reads will get a lot of their own ideas," explains the permanent bibliophile. "What happens is that besides increasing your vocabulary, reading also increases the things you think about. There are many ideas in a book, and you start to see those ideas and begin to formulate your own, not only about the ideas in that book, but about things around you." Glenn seems to think of himself more as an advocate of the written word than the sung one. "You have to have that inner desire, that quest for more," he says explaining his love of books. "There are a lot of people who just like to read and then there are those who find that reading stimulates something and they want more."

This thirst for knowledge crosses over to his fans. They view Glenn as something of a sage or soothsayer — a songwriter who can offer them a little bit more. "It's cool that they would think of me that way," the singer says modestly. "Even though you don't want them to. But then again, I'd rather have them listen to what I'm saying than somebody like Poison. A band like that is just about fucking girls and taking drugs." He explains where a band like that comes from. "There's this whole scene on Sunset Blvd. in Los Angeles where bands just get together to make money and screw girls. That's their sole reason to get in a band. They have these little rich girls support them, and they're famous on the Sunset Strip and that's it. We're not about that at all."

Even without the benefit of much media attention, Glenn's latest album has sold close to half a million copies. This figure means a lot to the singer because the number was made by his true fans. "It's much more gratifying to sell records and have people coming to our shows, because we've done it the hard way — without any kind of media support. It's real. No one can come up to me and say, 'Oh you're just an MTV band or you're just a hyped band,' because that's false."

Around this time last year, Danzig's "Mother" and "Am I Demon" videos were banned from MTV. To this day, Glenn holds a grudge against the megaton network, who recently asked him to appear on their failing miserably "Headbanger's Ball." "They came up with this deal that if I agreed to appear on 'the Ball,' they'd play 'Mother' and 'Twist Of Cain' one weekend and 'Her Black Wings' and 'Killer Wolf' the following weekend. I asked them, 'why should I appear on your show if you're only going to play my videos once each and that's it.'" Even though Glenn refused to appear on "Headbanger's Ball," MTV has been rotating his videos with vicious regularity, perhaps hoping for the crooner to change his mind.

After attending a recent Danzig concert at the Beacon Theater in New York, I was surprised to see that a large part of the audience was

under 18 years old. Glenn says they're only part of the band's following. "We have a broad range of people coming to our shows. We do have a lot of young kids, but we also have a lot of older people too. They come out back and greet us at the end of the night, waiting by the tour bus, wanting an autograph or a handshake." All over the country, the band has been getting rave reviews. In the big cities (N.Y., L.A., SF), the band played 3,000 seater venues. In the smaller towns, they played the usual divey clubs. However, not once did a religious organization stage a protest in front of any gigs — not even in the Bible Belt. "I don't think they'd want to touch us," says Glenn. "All of my lyrics come from factual sources. A lot of them come from the Bible, so I don't think they'd want any part of us. They'd probably want to go after someone they'd have an easier time with."

Since Glenn's lyrics can take on mature themes, I wonder how much of his younger audience really understands. "You'd be surprised," Mr. Danzig claims. "A lot of them know what I'm saying, then a lot of them don't, but that brings us back to the point that I also want to write songs that just get people off. They don't have to listen to the lyrics if they don't want to. They'll just get a good song. But in that good song, if they want to listen, there's something being said." Glenn likes when people attach their own meanings to certain songs because it brings a personal touch into it.

As far as comparing Glenn to other performers, Elvis is definitely at the top of the list. The King was quite visible during his formative years. "He was one of the people I grew up listening to," says the singer. "I have two older brothers, you know, and Elvis was constantly on TV." If you listen to a song like "Blood And Tears," you can definitely hear the similarities.

Recently, Glenn produced a record by a band from Louisville, Kentucky called Kinghorse. They used to be called Maurice, and a few years back, Samhain took them out for B dates on their midwest tour. The guys sent Glenn a demo, he liked it and passed it on to a friend over at Caroline Records, who signed them. The friend at Caroline eventually asked Glenn to produce it, and from what I hear, the LP is excellent and is now available.

In New York and New Jersey, the name Glenn Danzig is legendary. This dates back to his days with the Misfits and Samhain. However, after living in the tri-state area all of his life, Glenn finally made the move to Southern California. He currently resides in the Los Feliz area of L.A. and although dislikes certain things about the place, he's basically happy with the change. Unfortunately, when he moved out west, a change of scenery wasn't the only thing on his mind. "I was getting sick and tired of the political atmosphere back east," says Glenn, "all the racial nonsense and government corruption. I hate people who will be liberal just to be cool. They don't mean what they say, and when it comes down to it, they can't put their words into actions."

Suddenly the song "Long Way Back From Hell" echos faintly in the background and gets louder until you can't hear our voices anymore.

JANE'S ADDICTION (cont.)

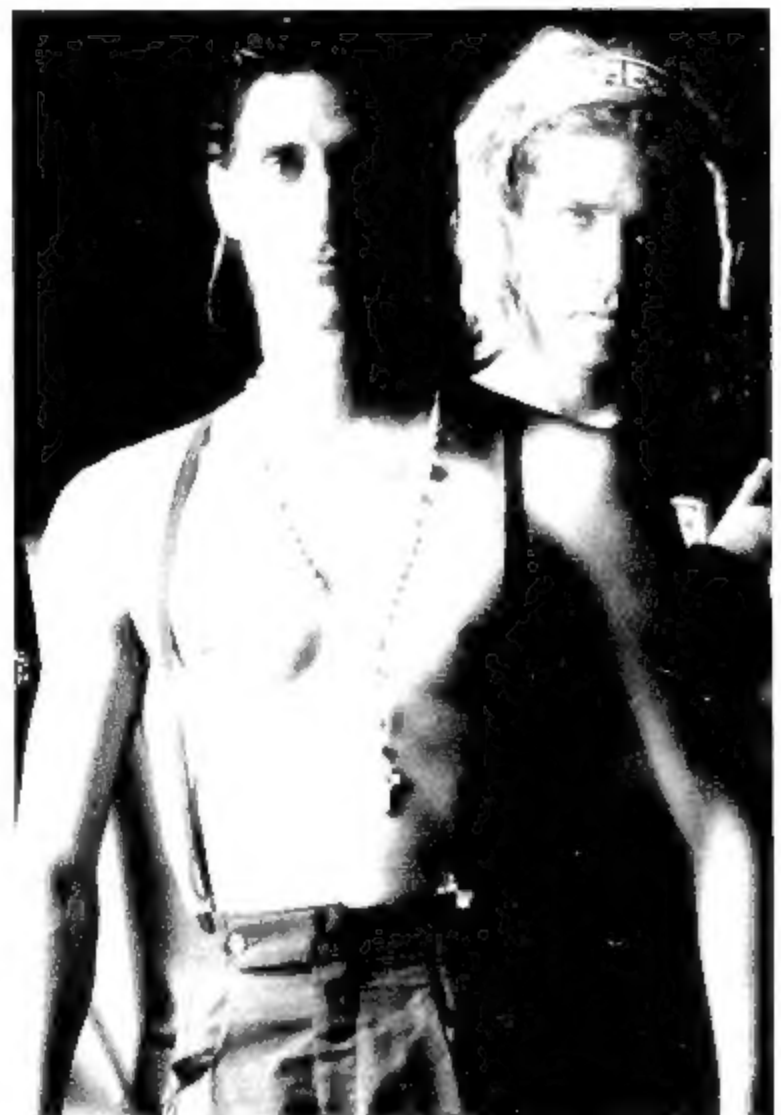
of the habitual. Some, as it might be interpreted, include this enigmatic third party. Contrary to what the title of the album might suggest, some of the rituals are neither habitual or mundane. As revealed earlier, Perry has a special, almost mystical view about the order of things. Part of this view stems from his keen interest in the Santeria pagan religion which predominates parts of Mexico, Cuba and the Caribbean. The fact that much of the film was shot in Mexico is no mere coincidence. In one scene, Perry and Casey undergo an actual open-air Santeria wedding ceremony, and slash their wrists as part of the ritual. Hopefully, that's not an act that is also habitual.

Santeria has gotten some bad press lately because of the Matamoros witch cult murders and its links to Haitian voodoo. But in reality, Santeria is merely the blend of several religious liturgies, including Roman Catholicism, Pueblo Indian beliefs and African animism. "People get so bent out of shape about it," complains Perry. "It was the Christian missionaries backed by Spanish armies who invaded Central America and replaced the pagan gods of the native Americans with their own gods — the saints — that's all they are. Now, Santeria is just reversing that."

If one's beliefs and convictions affect one's art, then Perry's abode in L.A. is a living shrine to that sentiment. Behind his large sculptures (one from the NOTHING'S SHOCKING cover and the new one) are walls ornate with skulls, crucifixes, madonnas and various occultic icons. Aesthetics, however, has as much to do with it as any otherworldly convictions.

Perry does have visions of the future, though. "In a hundred years, I see people communicating telepathically," he says. As for visions of his own future, he proclaims, "the time of making sacrifices and compromises is over. I've put in more than my share of pain. I think I've earned my right to live and my right to make the kind of art I want to."

And whether that art continues in the form of Jane's Addiction or not, what Perry Farrell creates will always be a gift to us all.



Chris Cuffaro